

A [Congressional report](#) into the friendly fire death of Cpl. Pat Tillman was released this week. The report exposed the truth behind the Bush Administration's lack of candor in this case.

Department of Defense officials originally told the Tillman family he was killed by enemy fire, and then even posthumously awarded Tillman the Silver Star in a public ceremony. Within hours of his death, however, several officials in the chain of command suspected it had been a friendly fire incident, but failed to inform the Tillman family until five weeks later.

I am outraged and saddened by the Bush Administration's lack of cooperation in the investigations surrounding the death of San Jose resident Cpl. Patrick Tillman, as documented this week in a report published by my colleagues on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Despite persistent and exemplary work by Chairman Henry Waxman in trying to elucidate the truth, the Administration's stonewall-and-spin tactics have denied full closure to the Tillman family and all of us who care about the truth.

While enduring pain and anguish, the Tillman family has patiently waited through several flawed Department of Defense investigations. They bravely sat through hearings and worked tirelessly with me and my colleagues, looking for answers to the many questions surrounding Pat's untimely death. I am awed by their resilience and thankful for their tenacity. For this Administration, however, it seems that political cover is the priority, rather than respect for the family of an American hero, and the American public.

"I don't recall" was the mantra of all high-level Administration officials -including Donald Rumsfeld- when they testified before the committee. Coincidentally, nobody could remember when they learned that Pat had died in a friendly fire incident, and most importantly, who told them and who they told.

From the moment Pat gave up a lucrative contract with the NFL to enlist as an Army Ranger, the Administration quickly took notice and publicized it. When Pat died, President Bush went out of his way to issue a press release, even breaking Department of Defense guidelines for the

sake of expediency.

But as soon as it became clear that Pat was a friendly fire victim, the Administration seemed to lose interest and their collective memory. There was no urgency to tell the Tillman family the truth before a public memorial service. No one remembered how they handled this shocking omission. Generals of all ranks and senior White House officials, including the former Secretary of Defense, developed a "near universal lack of recall," as the report describes it.

Chairman Waxman has been very persistent in trying to find out who knew what and when. Unfortunately, all that work was stymied by an administration more interested in sweeping its mistakes under the rug than giving the families of our courageous soldiers the least they deserve for their service and sacrifice: the truth.